

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of fabricating a MEMS device, the method comprising:
~~depositing~~ forming a metal layer over a substrate;
patterning the metal layer to form an electrode of the MEMS device, the electrode serving as an etch stop in a subsequent etching step of a sacrificial layer; and
changing a composition of the electrode by thermally processing the electrode in an environment comprising nitrogen.
2. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the environment includes ammonia.
3. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the electrode comprises a bottom electrode of a light modulator.
4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the metal layer comprises titanium and the composition of the electrode is changed to comprise titanium-nitride.
5. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the composition of the electrode is changed to that of a material selected from a group comprising TiWN and WN.
6. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein changing the composition of the electrode comprises performing a rapid thermal process on the metallic electrode to form a conductive metallized ceramic material.
7. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein depositing the metal layer comprises depositing the metal layer by physical vapor deposition (PVD).
8. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
prior to depositing the metal layer, depositing an isolation layer over the substrate.
9. (currently amended) A method of forming a metallic electrode, the method comprising:
~~depositing~~ forming a metal layer over a surface; ~~and~~
thermally processing the metal layer with a nitrogen source to change the composition of the metal layer to a conductive metallized ceramic[.];
forming a sacrificial layer over the metal layer; and
etching the sacrificial layer using the metal layer as an etch stop protecting an underlying layer of material.
10. (original) The method of claim 9 further comprising:
etching the metal layer to form a metallic electrode prior to thermally processing the metal layer.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 9 wherein thermally processing the metal layer changes the composition of the metal layer to that of a material selected from a group consisting of comprising TiWN and WN.
12. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the metal layer comprises titanium and thermally processing the metal layer changes the composition of the metal layer to titanium nitride.
13. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the metal layer is deposited by physical vapor deposition and thermally processed by rapid thermal processing.
14. (canceled)
15. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~14~~ 9 wherein the sacrificial layer comprises silicon.
16. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~14~~ 9 wherein the sacrificial layer is etched using a noble gas fluoride.
17. (currently amended) A method of forming a metallic electrode, the method comprising:
 - ~~sputtering~~ forming a layer of titanium over a surface;
 - etching the layer of titanium to form a metallic electrode; ~~and~~
 - thermally processing the metallic electrode in an environment including ammonia to change the composition of the metallic electrode to comprise titanium nitride[.];
 - forming a sacrificial layer comprising silicon over the metallic electrode; and
 - etching the sacrificial layer using a gaseous etchant using the metallic electrode as an etch stop.
18. (canceled)
19. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~18~~ 17 wherein the gaseous etchant comprises a noble gas fluoride.
20. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~18~~ 17 wherein etching the sacrificial layer using the gaseous etchant creates an air gap ~~separates~~ separating a resilient movable structure and the metallic electrode.